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# **Strengthening local democracy in Scotland: The Faith perspective**

Dr. Oliver Escobar

Report from a forum with faith communities  
facilitated by the Academy of Government  
to inform COSLA's Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy



**Academy of Government**  
**The UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH**

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Please note that **‘single inverted commas’** indicate words and sentences taken verbatim from forum participants (see Annex 2).

## **Summary**

This is a summary of key themes that emerged during the three sessions of a two-hour forum in which members of diverse faith communities discussed how to strengthen local democracy in Scotland.

### **1. Vision**

- The first theme was about empowering local democracy. Forum participants supported redefining democracy so that it means more than government and party politics. There was broad agreement on the idea of enabling more 'local control where practical'. This was accompanied by caveats about establishing 'clear structures' and 'clear responsibility at all levels'. The forum was therefore prepared to support a more empowered role for community councils. This would require developing community councils that 'are representative of that community', but also that they 'have decision making authority at local level'.
- Forum participants also prioritised the development of a more participatory way of making policies and decisions. They spoke about a relationship with public authorities based on 'inclusivity and citizen empowerment'. This would mean enhancing 'accountability' by giving 'citizens access to decision making processes' and a 'genuine route to impact on decisions and policy'.
- The forum also supported developing a more robust local democracy through partnerships. Accordingly, they highlighted the need for 'partnerships between voluntary and faith groups' in order to develop meaningful community work. Similarly, some pointed to the need for partnership working also with the public sector, so that faith communities are properly connected to local authorities.
- Forum participants also articulated a vision for a democracy where representatives are 'more accountable', and therefore give opportunities for 'ongoing monitoring and transparency'. In a better local democracy, forum participants argued that there would be 'much more honesty from politicians' and that as a result this 'will lead to greater engagement in politics'.
- The forum also reflected on the need to nurture the conditions for local democracy to flourish. Here participants prioritised the need for investment in youth as well as ensuring security and safety in the community. At the heart of this theme was the idea that there needs to be a nurturing environment for local empowerment to succeed. Accordingly, forum participants argued for a 'fair distribution of resources' and for a 'concern for the common good of all, particularly the poor and marginalised'.

### **2. Problems and challenges**

- The forum pointed to lack of community cohesion and participation as a critical factor hindering a better local democracy. Here

participants prioritised problems such as 'not knowing your neighbours' as a clear indicator of 'lack of interest in community issues, self-centeredness and apathy'. To this, the forum added the challenge of 'integration of communities' in the face of 'language barriers, cultural barriers, faith initiatives' and lack of cohesion.

- Equally, the forum highlighted the challenge of 'involving the younger generation', and there was also considerable emphasis on how to ensure that 'ethnic communities know that they have a voice' and that 'people understand they have a role to play in their local area'. For this to happen, challenges regarding 'inclusion' and creating a sense of shared 'ownership' by the community would have to be addressed.
- The forum was also concerned with the 'lack of spiritual values in society'. Here, forum participants shared strong feelings about how this factor may be related to social problems.
- Forum participants highlighted the overarching problem of inequalities in 'a society with ever-greater extremes of wealth and poverty'. They were also mindful of the current challenge of 'trying to provide good services with reduced means' while there are 'too many issues and too little resources'. However, forum participants also questioned approaches to public service that are 'money-centred' rather than 'people-centred', and criticised 'too much emphasis on lowest cost, and not enough on best service'.
- The forum also highlighted the lack of transparency, accountability and public involvement in representative democracy. Participants explained how public apathy can be fuelled by the lack of feeling that 'your opinions will make a difference', as well as by the absence of 'clear concise information about local decision making processes'. This can feed 'feelings of powerlessness', 'ignorance about the democratic process', and foster a 'disillusioned and disengaged' citizenry.
- Forum participants insisted on the responsibility of representatives to take such challenges seriously. In particular, the forum discussed the need to overcome 'the institutional dishonesty of politicians, which has the effect of disengaging citizens from the political process'. They explained that this is not perhaps as much a matter of individual politicians, as it is about how the system can change individuals and their behaviours once they are part of the party political system.

### **3. Ideas, solutions and reforms**

- The forum prioritised several proposals around the importance of a diversity of citizens sharing public spaces together through activities that help to build more cohesive and vibrant communities. This sense of creating shared public spaces, where collective activities can be developed, was seen as a crucial antidote to individualism and fragmentation, and more generally as a way to 'challenge cultural norms that are disempowering'.

- Accordingly, participants proposed 'recreating social centres where mixing between groups and individuals is real rather than virtual'. Behind these ideas was the recognition that a multi-cultural society with a plural range of perspectives requires local face-to-face encounters where differences can be explored, stereotypes can be overcome and common ground can be built.
- They emphasised the need to 'develop ways to encourage community responsibility' and foster an 'ethos of service to community'. In a multicultural world, this means putting in place 'clear and precise communication structures integrating all communities'. It also requires 'facilitating a sense of meaning and purpose for people in each community' and for communities as a whole.
- The forum argued that the changes needed to revitalise local democracy may require rethinking the institutional landscape. Here participants considered different levels. Locally, they prioritised 're-empowering community councils', although they recognised that this would entail providing 'skilled professional assistance' to them. Furthermore, forum participants also called for a 'renegotiation of local-central government relationships and responsibilities', and emphasised that devolution would require clarity regarding 'who is accountable for various tasks'.
- But devolution, according to the forum, shouldn't stop at the level of local authorities and community councils. Participants also advocated rethinking the institutional landscape in terms of how citizens may be meaningfully involved in policy and decision-making.
- The forum also proposed exploring the idea of 'creating an upper house in the Scottish Parliament composed of respected people capable of influencing the spiritual and moral direction of the nation'. This citizen-led chamber would have the role of counterbalancing the problems of party-political representative democracy, and should be underpinned by 'a political will and desire to serve our community with integrity and honesty'.
- Participants also prioritised a 'better sharing of resources, including money and tax, so that as a community we have more to spend on delivering our aspirations'. For this, some participants advocated the 'economic restructuring of wages and taxes to reduce present extremes' in society at large.
- The forum argued for a 'paradigm shift: recognising that there are spiritual solutions to practical problems'. Accordingly, forum participants reflected on basic values shared by their diverse faith communities and illustrated how a faith perspective can enrich public dialogue and deliberation and therefore democracy at large.

## **Background**

On 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 2014, 24 members of diverse faith communities gathered for a two-hour forum on how to strengthen local democracy in Scotland. Please see Annex 4 for the list of communities who took part.

The author of this report facilitated the forum. The purpose was to articulate the Faith perspective in order to inform COSLA's Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy. For information on the Commission please follow the link:

<http://www.localdemocracy.info>

## **Forum format**

The forum was designed to maximise inclusion of every participant, including those who may be less inclined to speak in public or prefer other means of sharing their views. This was done through a combination of small table discussions and plenary sessions, and based on both individual work reflected on the coloured-coded cards produced by participants, as well as group work comprising the prioritisation of key points at each table.

The forum programme is included in Annex 1. The table facilitators were recruited from amongst the participants, and provided with a brief (see Annex 3) detailing the facilitation approach and the format used for each session.

## **About this report**

The report outlines themes and points prioritised by forum participants. Most points were broadly supported at the forum, unless stated otherwise. That means that I have focussed on themes and issues where participants agreed, and the format of the forum allowed checking for consensus or disagreement. For the full transcription of the points made please see Annex 2. The draft report was sent to all participants for feedback before being sent to the Commission.

The forum comprised three sessions, each including group work and plenary deliberation, and organised around three questions:

- What is your vision for local democracy?
- What are the current problems and challenges?
- What are the potential solutions and reforms?

The following sections present key findings from these three sessions.



## 1. A vision for a vibrant local democracy

During the first session, forum participants talked about creating a shared vision for a more vibrant local democracy. All their points are collated in Annex 2. Here I outline the five main themes that emerged during the conversations.



The **first** theme in the forum's vision was about **empowering local democracy**. Forum participants shared a sense that it is necessary to redefine democracy so that it means more than government and party politics. Furthermore, they also pondered over what it would mean to have a more truly local democracy. There was broad agreement on the idea of enabling more 'local control where practical'. This was accompanied by caveats about establishing 'clear structures' and 'clear responsibility at all levels'. Nonetheless, the forum was prepared to support a more empowered role for community councils. This would require developing community councils that 'are representative of that community', but also that community councils 'have decision making authority at local level'. There was also emphasis on 'supporting community councils particularly in deprived areas which tend to struggle'. A final strand in this theme highlighted the role that 'community services' can play in 'development of learning and engagement', and therefore in supporting a more empowered local democracy.

The **second** theme builds on the previous, and takes the argument further. Forum participants prioritised the development of **a more participatory way of making policies and decisions**. Accordingly, their vision was based on the idea of ensuring 'a stronger voice for the people' and that 'everyone is treated equally'. They spoke about the need for 'community outreach to residents directly for feedback' in a relationship based on 'inclusivity and citizen empowerment'. This would mean enhancing 'accountability' by giving 'citizens access to decision making processes' and a 'genuine route to impact on

decisions and policy'. In their vision, this would entail a double strategy that combines fostering face to face contact through 'more local meetings with local people', alongside 'taking full advantage of new media and social networking' when it comes to opening new channels for participatory policy making. Some forum participants also suggested that 'Faith communities should have support to identify members to be part of decision making', and ensure that the faith perspective is part of participatory democracy.

The **third** theme reflected the forum's vision of **developing a more robust local democracy through partnerships**. Accordingly, they highlighted the need for 'partnerships between voluntary and faith groups' in order to develop meaningful community work. Similarly, some pointed to the need for partnership working also with the public sector, so that faith communities are properly connected to local authorities. In this sense, many saw as essential to ensure that official consultations involve 'all parties', and that 'self-agendas' are set aside in order to serve communities and address their needs. Enacting this vision would require more 'effective communication between groups'.

The **fourth** theme of this visioning session was about **improving representative democracy**. This was an issue that carried strong feelings amongst forum participants. For the majority, there is a strong case for aspiring to a democracy where representatives are 'more accountable', and they argued that there are some 'good examples of councillors who communicate' and therefore give opportunities for 'ongoing monitoring and transparency'. In a better local democracy, forum participants envisioned that there would be 'much more honesty from politicians' and that as a result this 'will lead to greater engagement in politics'. This vision included a culture of local representatives based on 'equality, transparency and openness'. And there was also a suggestion for improving representative democracy at national level, namely, creating a citizen-led second chamber at the Scottish Parliament –an idea revisited later in the proposals section.

The **fifth** and final theme of this overarching vision is about **nurturing the conditions for local democracy to flourish**. Here participants prioritised the need for investment in youth as well as ensuring security and safety in the community. At the heart of this theme is the idea that there needs to be a nurturing environment for local empowerment to succeed. Accordingly, forum participants argued for a 'fair distribution of resources' and for a 'concern for the common good of all, particularly the poor and marginalised'. This means 'identifying problem areas and giving support', as well as ensuring that public services are 'easily accessed by all'. In addition, forum participants were mindful that there is a 'cultural component for fostering neighbourhood cohesion and co-operation', and so they envisioned a more vibrant public sphere stimulated through 'local events' and communications that encourage 'reflection and participation'. Although the emphasis of this vision is on the collective dimension of society, the

forum was also keen on stressing the importance of fostering 'a sense of individual responsibility'.

## 2. Current problems and challenges

During the second session, participants mapped out barriers, problems and challenges that stand in the way of building a more vibrant local democracy along the lines of their vision above. All the points made by forum participants are collated in Annex 2. Here I outline the four main themes that emerged from the conversations.



The **first** one points to the **lack of community cohesion and participation** as a critical factor hindering a better local democracy. Here forum participants prioritised problems such as 'not knowing your neighbours' as a clear indicator of 'lack of interest in community issues, self-centeredness and apathy'. To this, the forum added the challenge of 'integration of communities' in the face of 'language barriers, cultural barriers, faith initiatives' and lack of cohesion. Some participants located the problem in 'an overly bureaucratic set of procedures' that can 'render dynamic growth frustrating and discourage creative community development'. Others reflected on the problems of communication between communities and with officials, and that there may be a need to educate everyone on public dialogue and deliberation. Many also recognised the limitations in terms of time available for people to get involved, especially when 'work and family life becomes a priority'. Equally, the challenge of 'involving the younger generation' was also highlighted, and there was also considerable emphasis on how to ensure that 'ethnic communities know that they have a voice' and that 'people understand they have a role to play in their local area'. For this to happen, challenges regarding 'inclusion' and creating a sense of shared 'ownership' by the community would have to be addressed.

The **second** theme is concerned with a **'lack of spiritual values in society'**. Here, forum participants shared strong feelings about how this factor may be related to increases in 'family breakdowns and

suicide' rates. Some participants spoke about 'moral decline' and 'spiritual ignorance' without God as the foundation for true democracy, while others argued that 'faith and religion are not taken seriously at local authority level' and that 'separating church and state' may mean 'leaving no faith in (local) government'. Other related problems noted included the lack of funding for 'all cultural faith events', and the 'secularisation of education' to the detriment of 'manners and morality'.

The **third** theme that emerged strongly during this section of the forum was about **inequalities, lack of resources and the current approach to public services**. Forum participants highlighted the overarching problem of 'a society with ever-greater extremes of wealth and poverty'. They were also mindful of the current challenge of 'trying to provide good services with reduced means' while there are 'too many issues and too little resources'. However, forum participants also questioned approaches to public service that are 'money-centred' rather than 'people-centred', and criticised 'too much emphasis on lowest cost, and not enough on best service'. They exemplified these points with regard to three areas. Firstly, they pointed to the 'housing shortage' as well as the 'poor housing stock (not well insulated, wrong locations, etc)'. Secondly, they reflected on the paradox of the jobs market, with people who are overworked while others have no job. Finally, they illustrated the problem with the current approach to public services using the example of social work. As a participant put it, social workers have so many demands that they end up spending 'too much time firefighting rather than in prevention –e.g. sure start centres'. This points therefore to the idea of reorienting public services towards a more preventative agenda.

The **fourth** and final theme was about **the lack of transparency, accountability and public involvement in representative democracy**. On the one hand, forum participants explained how public apathy can be fuelled by the lack of feeling that 'your opinions will make a difference', as well as by the absence of 'clear concise information about local decision making processes'. This can feed 'feelings of powerlessness', 'ignorance about the democratic process', and foster a 'disillusioned and disengaged' citizenry. On the other hand, forum participants insisted on the responsibility of representatives to take such challenges seriously. In particular, the forum discussed the need to overcome 'the institutional dishonesty of politicians, which has the effect of disengaging citizens from the political process'. They explained that this is not perhaps as much a matter of individual politicians, as it is about how the system can change individuals and their behaviours once they are part of the party political system. As one put it, 'power can be a corrupting force', and many suggested that there is 'too great a distance between the elected and the electors'. In addition, the forum argued that the situation is worsened by a 'lack of real accountability to local people as a high proportion of finance comes from the centre leading to feelings of powerlessness' at local level.

### 3. Ideas, solutions and reforms

We dedicated the final section to propose ideas, potential solutions and reforms in order to overcome some of the challenges above and get closer to the vision of a more vibrant democracy outlined earlier. All the points made by forum participants can be seen in Annex 2. Here I outline the four themes that encompass the wealth of arguments and ideas developed at the forum.



The **first** overarching theme stressed the idea of **revitalising public spaces and community-making processes**. The forum prioritised several proposals around the importance of a diversity of citizens sharing together public spaces through activities that help to build more cohesive and vibrant communities. For instance, they proposed ‘using safe, neutral spaces, streets, parks, gardens, play streets, etc to enable meeting and exchange’, so that ‘people can meet and get to know each other on a regular basis’. This sense of creating shared public spaces, where collective activities can be developed, was seen as a crucial antidote to individualism and fragmentation, and more generally as a way to ‘challenge cultural norms that are disempowering’.

Accordingly, participants proposed ‘recreating social centres where mixing between groups and individuals is real rather than virtual’. Behind these ideas was the recognition that a multi-cultural society with a plural range of perspectives requires local face-to-face encounters where differences can be explored, stereotypes can be overcome and common ground can be built. Therefore, they proposed ‘generating interest and commitment in communities by organising regular local meetings that address local issues’. The importance of public space was also reflected in proposals to ‘introduce play streets for limited periods’ as well as supporting ‘walking, cycling and public transport’.

This emphasis on creating public spaces for interaction was accompanied by ideas on community-making. Participants prioritised ‘starting with the youth: inter-community sports, debates, fun events,



etc' that are sustained over time in order to develop shared understandings and civic bonds. They connected this to the need for 'schools to become community hubs' where 'citizenship education' fosters mutual understanding amongst 'all groups of people'. They also linked this to the idea of 'developing community by action through young people helping others', therefore nurturing a moral inclination to put 'others before self' in order to 'get away from consumerism and individualism and keep young people connected'.

At this point, the forum broadened the discussion and reflected on the role that all citizens should play in community-making. They emphasised the need to 'develop ways to encourage community responsibility' and foster an 'ethos of service to community'. In a multicultural world, this means putting in place 'clear and precise communication structures integrating all communities'. It also requires 'facilitating a sense of meaning and purpose for people in each community' and for communities as a whole. To achieve this, the forum advocated 'a reviewed vision of civic identity, belonging, and concern for the common good'.

This takes us to the **second** theme, in which the forum sought to articulate how some of the changes needed to revitalise local democracy may require **rethinking the institutional landscape**. Here participants considered different levels. Locally, they prioritised 're-empowering community councils (i.e. return certain powers from county or Borough councils to community councils)'. However, they also recognised that this would require providing 'skilled professional assistance to creating, maintaining and sustaining community councils'. Furthermore, forum participants also called for a 'renegotiation of local-central government relationships and responsibilities', and emphasised that devolution would require clarity regarding 'who is accountable for various tasks'.

But devolution, according to the forum, shouldn't stop at the level of local authorities and community councils. Participants also advocated rethinking the institutional landscape in terms of how citizens may be meaningfully involved in policy and decision-making. Therefore, they proposed ensuring 'local user-friendly access to the democratic process', so that authorities 'listen to all the local communities about all issues and problems', and 'involve people at street, village, town, city and national levels'. Some also argued for the use of 'electronic voting and referendums on contentious issues'. Forum participants were so keen on exploring new ways of involving citizens in democracy that they also made a proposal to 'create an upper house in the Scottish Parliament (besides the lower house) composed of respected people capable of influencing the spiritual and moral direction of the nation (house of peers)'. This citizen-led chamber would have the role of counterbalancing the problems of party-political representative democracy, and should be underpinned by 'a political will and desire to serve our community with integrity and honesty'.

This emphasis on citizen participation and community-making also reflects the forum's distrust of partisan politics. The debate on the issue was lively, and actually some participants proposed a radical measure: 'end political parties, hold on politics that create a divisive effect on government'. When asked how this may work, some participants offered as an example increasing the number of independent politicians. After deliberating, participants voted to reflect their views on the suggestion of ending political parties: 8 voted yes, 5 voted no, and 7 remained undecided. The forum as a whole was therefore not prepared to change the institutional landscape of representative democracy, although it clearly expressed considerable distrust on party politics and its negative impact on the health of local democracy.

The **third** theme in this final section of the forum was about **sharing resources and resourcing local communities**. Participants prioritised a 'better sharing of resources, including money and tax, so that as a community we have more to spend on delivering our aspirations'. For this, some participants advocated the 'economic restructuring of wages and taxes to reduce present extremes'. This redistribution of resources and burdens would have to be made 'more attractive to the very rich and multinational companies'. The underlying feeling was expressed by a participant in these terms: 'I think too much wealth leads to apathy and too much poverty leads to disempowerment, need more wealth distribution'. If resources were better shared, the forum argued, it would be possible to better resource local communities. Moreover, the forum prioritised the idea that local government and public services should be more clearly under the control of citizens, so that the community is the real local authority. There were also specific ideas by participants in terms of sharing resources for instance by 'developing philanthropy' or ensuring housing needs by 'building more eco-friendly homes and cohousing schemes'.

The **fourth** and final theme was about **exploring spiritual solutions to practical problems**. The forum started by prioritising the need to rediscover the purpose of education and include 'skills to service society' and 'more spiritual and moral values linked to what we learn'. This would be a crucial step towards the 'paradigm shift' advocated by the forum: 'recognising that there are spiritual solutions to practical problems'. Accordingly, forum participants reflected on basic values shared by their diverse faith communities, for instance: 'think of others before self', and 'connect with nature to rediscover the wonder within'. Some argued that there is a 'need for a new truth to reconnect to God and to each other'. Participants were clear in their belief that a faith perspective can enrich public dialogue and deliberation and therefore democracy at large.

## **Conclusions**

Thanks to the enthusiasm that participants brought to their deliberative task at the forum, we managed to cover a lot of territory in a couple of hours. This is remarkable and exemplifies what can be achieved when a diversity of communities of faith meet for a collaborative dialogue on an issue that matters. Common ground can be discovered, while also exploring diverse sensibilities towards important public issues.

What seems clear from this forum is that there seems to be some concern amongst these faith communities about the way democracy works both at national and local level. Consequently, forum participants shared ideas and proposals for rethinking representative democracy and finding new forms of participatory democracy where all perspectives and citizens can be involved. They also made a clear call for new approaches to community-making, specially reinvigorating the variety of public spaces where different people meet to explore their differences and develop civic bonds.

Other areas of broad agreement were the need to devolve power more locally, and to find ways to share resources in a more equitable manner. Many of the proposals were clearly guided by an inter-faith perspective articulated around basic shared principles. Accordingly, running throughout the forum was also a clear sense that the faith perspective has a lot to contribute to local democracy, and that the goal must be fostering the spaces and networks where public dialogue and deliberation can flourish across divides.



## **Annex 1– Forum programme**

### **Strengthening local democracy in Scotland: The Faith perspective**

18.00-20.00, 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 2014, Golden Lion Hotel, Stirling

A forum with faith communities  
facilitated by the Academy of Government (University of Edinburgh)  
to inform COSLA's Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy.

18.00	Introductions to the Commission and this forum
18.15	What is your vision for local democracy?
18.45	What are the current problems and challenges?
19.15	What are the potential solutions and reforms?
19.50	Wrap up: What happens next?
20.00	Close

## Annex 2– Contributions by forum participants

The following tables collate all the points (written in coloured-coded cards) contributed by participants during the three sessions of the forum. I have grouped them by themes, although many issues clearly overlap. When I did not manage to include a point in the overarching themes, or couldn't understand its context, I added it at the end of each table. The tables include both the cards that each group prioritised for plenary discussion (Priority Cards), and the rest of cards generated by participants during small group discussion (Other Cards).

<b>Session 1</b> <b>What is your vision for local democracy?</b> [Green cards]	
Themes	Cards written by forum participants
<b>Empowering local democracy</b>	<p><b>Priority Cards:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How “local” democracy should be organised: local neighbourhood, local authority, greater/whole Scotland [re ‘democracy’, the forum emphasises the need to define democracy as more than government and politics]</li> <li>• More local control where practical [several cards reiterate this point]</li> <li>• Clear responsibility at all levels</li> <li>• Local community councils to have decision making authority at local level and are representative of that community, i.e. visible representation of all groups</li> </ul> <p><b>Other cards:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community councils should be re-empowered</li> <li>• Community councils empowered</li> <li>• Fostering “supporting” community councils particularly in “deprived areas” which tend to struggle</li> <li>• 1.Clear structures, 2. Appropriate responsibilities; focus on community development, focus on reinvigorating existing communities</li> <li>• Community services, development of learning and engagement</li> </ul>
<b>A more participatory way of making policies and decisions</b>	<p><b>Priority Cards:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stronger voice for people</li> <li>• Everyone treated equally</li> <li>• Make sure everyone’s voice is heard cos often people are despondent</li> <li>• Community outreach to residents directly for feedback, inclusivity &amp; citizen empowerment</li> <li>• Accountability with citizens access to decision making process + genuine route to impact on decisions/policy</li> </ul> <p><b>Other cards:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More local meetings with local people</li> <li>• Taking full advantage of new media &amp; social networking</li> <li>• Listen to the voice of the people</li> <li>• Faith communities should have support through L.C.C to identify member/members to be part of decision making process and have a place on L.C.C</li> </ul>
<b>Developing a more robust local democracy through</b>	<p><b>Priority Cards:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnerships between voluntary &amp; faith groups in community</li> </ul>

<b>partnerships</b>	<b>Other cards:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation of all parties addressing the needs &amp; serving our community without self-agenda</li> <li>• Partnership working e.g. East Renfrewshire care home + Jewish community</li> <li>• Listening more than giving input</li> <li>• Effective communication between groups</li> <li>• More liaison with local council</li> </ul>
<b>A better functioning representative democracy</b>	<b>Priority Cards:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More accountable representatives; good examples of councillors who communicate, ongoing monitoring and transparency</li> </ul> <b>Other cards:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor the activity level of local councillors</li> <li>• Much more honesty from politicians- will lead to greater engagement in politics</li> <li>• Equality, transparency, openness</li> <li>• Scottish parliament should include an upper house as well as a lower house. The upper house should be composed of respected people of Scotland, not just politicians- able to see issues from a sensible, instead of a simply political, perspective (i.e. concerning faith and morality and education issues)</li> </ul>
<b>Nurturing the conditions for local democracy to flourish</b>	<b>Priority Cards:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investment in youth</li> <li>• Security and safety in the community</li> </ul> <b>Other cards:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fair distribution of resources</li> <li>• Identifying problem areas and giving support (Regeneration areas)</li> <li>• Concern for the common good of all particularly the poor &amp; marginalized</li> <li>• Easily accessed by all i.e. services, need for good communication</li> <li>• "Cultural" component for fostering neighbourhood cohesion &amp; co-operation- local events, newsletters and the like encouraging reflection &amp; participation</li> <li>• A sense of individual responsibility</li> </ul>
<b>Other</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good communication</li> <li>• It has a stronger voice</li> <li>• To help and assist in the development of service</li> <li>• Security and safety in the community</li> <li>• Edinburgh: community outreach excellent</li> <li>• It has a stronger voice in local issues; local democracy as a whole would be huge voice (strength)</li> <li>• Networking of beliefs, actions and responses</li> <li>• Local democracy can only work if it is based on the brotherhood of man centering on God as our common Parent</li> </ul>

<b>Session 2</b> <b>What are the current problems and challenges?</b> [Blue cards]	
<b>Themes</b>	<b>Cards written by forum participants</b>
<b>Lack of community</b>	<b>Priority Cards:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not knowing your neighbours</li> </ul>

<b>cohesion and participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integration of communities: language barriers, cultural barriers, faith initiatives, not integrated</li> <li>• Lack of interest in community issues- “Self-centeredness” and apathy</li> </ul> <p><b>Other cards:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generating interest + commitment from those in areas often described as ‘challenging’ in which to live</li> <li>• An overly bureaucratic set of procedures can render dynamic growth frustrating &amp; discourage creative community development</li> <li>• Cross local area communication &amp; feedback between communities, i.e. reinventing the wheel</li> <li>• Lack of regard for local communications</li> <li>• Educate on us + of ‘modern’ communication, the how to communicate</li> <li>• Lack of interest and involvement of people in their communities- too small or outlook</li> <li>• Little time to get involved- work and family life becomes a priority</li> <li>• Involving younger generation to take part</li> <li>• Ethnic communities to know that they have voice</li> <li>• Getting people to understand they have a role to play in their local area</li> <li>• Lack of involvement- people need to feel inclusion, a sense of ownership</li> <li>• No shared references</li> </ul>
<b>Lack of spiritual values</b>	<p><b>Priority Cards:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of spiritual values in society</li> <li>• More family breakdowns + suicide</li> </ul> <p><b>Other cards:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faith/religion not taken seriously at LA level, e.g. Glasgow farm of faiths nil investment in it</li> <li>• Moral decline</li> <li>• Separating church and state gets wider leaving no faith in (local) government</li> <li>• Local funding for all cultural faith events</li> <li>• Spiritual ignorance of people as to what is right and what is wrong, as to whether God exists or not, etc. There can never be a true democracy if people push God out of the picture</li> <li>• Creating unity of vision for ALL the community, spiritual solution to practical problems</li> <li>• Secularisation of education (lack of God-inspired or spiritual content), lack of education on manners and morality</li> <li>• The will! + desire! Human Beings! Incorporating the necessary virtues + requisites spiritual qualities</li> </ul>
<b>Inequalities, lack of resources and the approach to public services</b>	<p><b>Priority Cards:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Money, trying to provide good services with reduced means; a society with ever-greater extremes of wealth and poverty</li> <li>• Too much money centred, not enough people centred, e.g. housing</li> </ul> <p><b>Other cards:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too much emphasis on lowest cost, not enough on best service</li> <li>• Social work has so many ‘musts’ that it is required to do it spends too much time firefighting rather than in prevention, e.g. sure start centres</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jobs, people with jobs often under pressure to do people's work while others have none</li> <li>Too many issues and too little resources</li> <li>Poor housing stock: not well insulated, in wrong/inconvenient location</li> <li>Housing shortage</li> </ul>
<b>Lack of transparency, accountability and public involvement in representative democracy</b>	<p><b>Priority Cards:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apathy, not feeling your opinions will make any difference</li> <li>Providing clear concise, information about local LCC decision making process in plain 'English'</li> <li>Lack of real accountability to local people as high proportion of finance from centre leading to feelings of powerlessness</li> <li>Overcoming the institutional dishonesty of politicians, which has the effect of disengaging citizens from the political process [ notes: the issue is how the system can change individuals and their behaviours once they are part of the party political system]</li> </ul> <p><b>Other cards:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feelings of powerlessness- not being listened to or regarded</li> <li>Feedback systems "how decisions are fed back locally"</li> <li>Not responding, apathy</li> <li>Ignorance about democratic process</li> <li>Disillusioned, not engaged</li> <li>Power can be a corrupting force</li> <li>Politicians! (difficult to get to speak to); lack of commonality in the function of CC</li> <li>Too great a distance between the elected + the electors</li> </ul>
<b>Other</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intimidation</li> <li>Old fashioned values, being overtaken by media, iphones=young all have</li> <li>Irresponsible</li> <li>Funding for B.M.E organisations from local councils</li> </ul>

<b>Session 3</b> <b>What are the potential solutions and reforms?</b> [Yellow cards]	
Themes	Cards written by forum participants
<b>Revitalising public spaces and community-making processes</b>	<p><b>Priority Cards:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using safe, neutral space, streets, parks, gardens, play streets to enable meeting + exchange</li> <li>Organise small events where people can meet and get to know each other on a regular basis</li> <li>Challenge cultural norms that are disempowering [ notes: garden vs vegetables/growing]</li> <li>Start with the youth: inter community sports events, debates, fun events, not one-off- must be follow up</li> <li>Develop community by action through young people working for/helping others; notes: "others before self", getting away from consumerism and beyond individualism and keeping them (young people) connected.</li> </ul> <p><b>Other cards:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Re-create social centres where mixing between groups and individuals is real not virtual</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce 'play streets' for limited periods</li> <li>• Support walking, cycling and public transport</li> <li>• Implement means of generating interest and commitment in communities by organising regular local meetings that address the 'issues' in community</li> <li>• Neighbourhood individual initiatives to build familiarity &amp; interrelation</li> <li>• Regular, sustainable small community events</li> <li>• Citizenship education</li> <li>• Better structure education system to understand all groups of people</li> <li>• Schools to become community hubs</li> <li>• Ethos of service to community encouraged taught, etc!</li> <li>• Clear and precise communication structures, integrating all communities</li> <li>• Engage young people in community action</li> <li>• Develop ways to encourage community responsibility</li> <li>• Facilitate a sense of meaning + purpose for people in each community; a start has been made with free trade town fruit town etc; give communities a sense of meaning + purpose</li> <li>• Support community groups</li> <li>• A reviewed vision of civic identity + belonging + a concern for the common good</li> </ul>
<b>Rethinking the institutional landscape</b>	<p><b>Priority Cards:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-empower community councils (i.e. return certain powers from county or Borough councils to community councils)</li> <li>• Create an upper house in the Scottish Parliament (besides the lower house) composed of respected people capable of influencing the spiritual and moral direction of the nation (house of peers)</li> <li>• End political parties, hold on politics that create a divisive effect on government; notes: but how? [notes -e.g. independent politicians, 7 undecided, 8 yes, 5 no]</li> </ul> <p><b>Other cards:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Application of skilled professional assistance to creating, maintaining and sustaining community councils</li> <li>• Local representatives to report back to local councils and central government, to make the correct decision</li> <li>• Re-negotiate local-central government relationship/responsibilities</li> <li>• Knowing who is accountable for various tasks and how to read them</li> <li>• Local user-friendly access to democratic process</li> <li>• Involve people at street, village, town, city and national levels</li> <li>• Listen to the local (all) communities about all the issues/problems</li> <li>• Straight forward routes to decision makers via local councils</li> <li>• Electronic voting + referendums on contentious issues</li> <li>• 'Small solutions'</li> <li>• More information services; help if there are discrepancies in clearing problems</li> <li>• Political will + desire to serve our community with integrity and honesty</li> </ul>
<b>Sharing resources and resourcing local communities</b>	<p><b>Priority Cards:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better sharing of resources [notes: money, tax, so as a community we have more to spend on delivering our aspirations]</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local gov provides services for people (the community) if they truly served and if the community was seen as the 'local authority' it would be very different [notes: the people=local authority]</li> </ul> <p><b>Other cards:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic restructuring of wages and taxes to reduce present extremes</li> <li>Make tax paying more attractive to the very rich and multi-national companies</li> <li>I think too much wealth leads to apathy and too much poverty leads to disempowerment, need more wealth distribution</li> <li>Mainstreaming of services to be real not tokenistic</li> <li>Build more eco-friendly homes and cohousing schemes</li> <li>Develop philanthropy</li> </ul>
<b>Exploring spiritual solutions to practical problems</b>	<p><b>Priority Cards:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education: the purpose of it? Skills to service society; more spiritual &amp; moral values linked to what we learn</li> <li>Paradigm shift- recognising there are spiritual solutions to practical problems</li> </ul> <p><b>Other cards:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Think of others before self</li> <li>Need for a new truth to reconnect people to God and to each other</li> <li>Connect with nature to rediscover the wonder within concrete jungle is poison for the heart</li> <li>Switch off the TV, the unobtainable fantasy that it sells + so many buy into, it massively distracts us from real life</li> </ul>

## Annex 3– Facilitator brief

### Facilitator brief for table deliberation

- Your job is to ensure that everyone has opportunities to participate, that everyone's ideas are respected, that no one dominates and that the task is done effectively.
- There is little time and a lot of work, so time-keeping is essential. You may contribute to the conversation, but please lead by example and avoid taking too much 'air time'.

#### Structure for Table Deliberation:

1. **Quiet time [2 minutes]**. Read the question on the screen and allow participants 2 minutes of quiet time to write their points on cards. Important:
  - a. Use the bingo pens and cards provided (session 1 = green; session 2 = blue; session 3 = yellow)
  - b. One statement per card. If a participant has several points to contribute please ask them to write each point on a different card
2. **Sharing [5 minutes]**. Invite each participant to briefly share their points and place the cards on the table so that everyone can see them. Important:
  - a. This round is just to listen to all the points; discussion will take place at the next round and the plenary.
3. **Prioritising [8 minutes]**. Participants discuss the points made and prioritise 3 cards to be taken to the plenary discussion. Important:
  - a. Explain that all the cards will be collected for the report, but now we are deciding the priorities to be discussed at the plenary.
  - b. Allow discussion and clarification of the cards. Participants may want to merge similar cards into a new one.
  - c. Finally, seek consensus on the 3 cards that you will take to the plenary. If the group can't reach consensus, ask participants to vote by marking with a dot their preferred 3 cards. Then tally the votes and check that the group agrees.

#### SESSIONS / TIMINGS / QUESTIONS

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3
<b>18.15 – 18.45pm</b>	<b>18.45 – 19.15</b>	<b>19.15 – 19.50pm</b>
<b><u>What is your vision for local democracy?</u></b>	<b><u>What are the current problems and challenges?</u></b>	<b><u>What are the potential solutions and reforms?</u></b>
(Green cards)	(Blue cards)	(Yellow cards)



## **Annex 4– Faith communities attending the forum**

Baha'i

Buddhist

Christian

- Church of Scotland
- Catholic
- Quaker
- Methodist

Jewish

Muslim

Sikh

Family Federation for World Peace and Unification